

BOY- CHILD EDUCATION IN A COVID-19 PRONE SOCIETY A Critical Appreciation

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Abstract

The Boy-Child Education entails training the mind, character and abilities of the boy- child. As such, using the method of critical analysis, the researcher finds out that the COVID-19 pandemic has hampered the boy-child education. Due to the pandemic, the boy child missed out on their education and could no longer assembly to be educated on their values and this exposed them to violent and harmful practices. The researcher therefore recommends that resources for online learning should be provided for the boy child as to help put them back on track. Also, the media should get fully involved in educating the boy- child.

Keyword: Boy-child, Education, COVID-19, Pandemic

Introduction

Education is vital and in this era, it is imperative in such a way that no- one can do without it irrespective of one's biological affiliation. In the southeast (especially Igbo speaking) areas, one prevalent problem is the boy- child drop out syndrome (Oluwatobi, 2006). The boys for economic reasons vehemently refuse to go to school and those who enter primary school dropout prematurely and this is caused by the economic and financial problems encountered by the educated in the society. This leads to the unpopular saying quoting self acclaimed president of Marlians, Naira Marley, that *School Na Scam*. This is a saying which means that education is irrelevant to the boy child who is expected to be financially buoyant irrespective of the means. There is a high level of uncertainties, which is beclouding meaningful planning in Nigeria's educational system. This can be very dangerous particularly as the future of Nigeria and Nigerians will be determined y the level of education her nationals have acquired (Aluede, 2006, p.97).

United Nations Children's fund, the federal ministry of Education and state Agencies for Mass Education have jointly or in collaboration directed towards providing Non- formal education curriculum and associated reading materials development for the out of school learners. The universal basic education programme, launched by the Obasanjo administration is expected to help solve the problem of access of formal education for many school- age children especially the boy child (Oluwatobi, 2006).

We are made to believe that men are a superior social group to women. The society believes and behaves accordingly that we are in the men's world but we must recognize that the boy-child is also a victim of gender conditioning, social cultural norm, bad examples, violence and

more. It has been suggested that a neglected boy child generally grows up to be a bigger danger to the society than the girls.

Background Knowledge on COVID-19

Corona virus disease popularly known as Covid 19 has rapidly spread in 2019 and it was declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020 by the world health organisation (WHO). The Covid 19 disease is an emerging respiratory infection caused by a novel corona virus called Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus 2 (SARS-COV-2). The virus belongs to the Corona virus family which is the Zoonotic pathogens, the virus cause and transmits illnesses between human and several animal species such as cattle, camels, cats, and bats. The disease was detected initially in late December 2019 in Wuhan, Hubei province, China, and spread worldwide 2 months later. The disease has drastically expanded in US, Spain, Italy, Germany, France, China, Iran, the UK, and Turkey. The virus is similar to the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus (MERS-COV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-COV) which have their origin in bats. The virus had caused more than 3.7 million confirmed cases and killed at least 260,000 worldwide up to the 11th of April 2020. The symptoms of covid illnesses range from very mild fever (fever and respiratory symptoms such as cough and shortness of breath) to severe (pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome and kidney failure). Elderly persons and those suffering from co-morbidities like heart disease, lung disease and diabetes are at a higher risk of developing this illness.

The COVID-19 disease has affected the world, in terms of economy and education due to the drastic spread of the disease which have been proven to have been proven to have no vaccine yet and the available medical interventions are supportive only.

Concept of Education

Obianuju (2014) sees education as inalienable right of all irrespective of the person's circumstances. Education in it's general sense is a form of learning which the knowledge, skills, values, benefits and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through storytelling, discussion, teaching, training and research. It has also been described as the most important aspect of human development, a key to successful living, especially the boy child education (Michael, 2011)

Education provides information to an inexperienced person to help him/ her develop physically, mentally, socially, spiritually, politically and economically (Ufforma, 2009). This is why the vice- chancellor of an institution while awarding certificates of grandaunts says " You have been found worthy in character and learning". In education parlance, it means that the individual has acquired adequate knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to perform actively as a citizen. Duccase (1958) gave etymological definition of education when he said: 'Etymologically, to educate is to lead out or bring out'. Cremin (1971) defines it as a deliberate, systematic and sustained effort to transmit, evoke ,or acquire knowledge, values, attitudes, skills and sensibilities. The goal of every society and family should be raise

individuals who are productive, physically, psychologically, socially and mentally and this can only be achieved by educating the boy child who at most is the leader of tomorrow.

Maritain (1943) who asserted that 'education has triple, yet intermingled connotation and refers either to (in its broadcast sense) any process by means of which man is shaped and led towards fulfilment.

The Boy-Child

The boy-child is a biological male offspring from birth to eighteen years. This period covers the Crèche, Nursery, Primary and Secondary school. During this period, the boy-child is malleable, builds and develops his personality and character. He is dependent on others especially his peer group who he popularly refers to as "My Man them" or "My Gee". He models his behaviour through Observation, repetition and mainly through Imitation. According to Sutherland (2001), his physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional development starts and progresses to the peak at this young stage. The boy-child likes to be the centre of everyone's attention, so a lot of times, they misbehave or make inappropriate comments.

The Boy Child Education

The education before now has never been a topic of discussion as males have always been viewed more educationally advantageous than the female counterparts due to the fact that they are believed to be the leaders of tomorrow (Isibor, 2012). Educating the boy child enables him to understand his roles and responsibilities in relation to the creator, society, and the environment. Thus, educating the boy child is tailored to fulfil these roles and responsibilities. Educating the boy child requires more and varying visual stimulants to keep them attentive. They favour symbolic texts and diagrams that stimulate the brain's hemisphere where they are typically more developed than their female peers. It is revealed that it is important to include project-based educational approaches to facilitate hands-on, kinaesthetic learning. This means that the more learning that is hands on and project driven, the more boys sense will be engaged in learning, causing more information to be retained, remembered and displayed on test and assignments.

The Boy-Child Education and Inherent Trend of *Igba-Boy Syndrome* (Apprenticeship) in South Eastern Nigeria

The boy-child education have been greatly affected by the *Igba-boy syndrome* in Nigeria in the sense that after thinking through the hassles they will encounter in school, they would prefer to go into apprenticeship because it is believed that it is a Money Making Machine (MMM) but we still cannot dispute the fact that apprenticeship is important to the boy-child because it gives him the opportunity to explore his skills. It is still imperative that every boy-child should be educated properly because it helps him in his mental, psychological and physical development and saves him the emotional trauma that occurs in apprenticeship. It is beyond all reasonable doubt that the value of education to the boy-child cannot be underestimated because education makes a man versatile while apprenticeship does not. In

apprenticeship you can only learn what your master permits you to learn or else if smart enough to think out of the box but education does otherwise. Giving quality education to the boy child will definitely bring a lot of change in any country's socio-economic, educational and political well being. The popular African phrase 'educate a child and you educate a whole village' subsists but this saying does not go with apprenticeship. Childhood education is always viewed as very important, and all hands must be on deck to see that this feat is continually achieved. Education is the one and only, and the surest way to attain the goals of nationhood. Eze Stella (2011) argues:

The problem of skilled manpower is the result of half-baked graduates, either from the Secondary or University level. Those who graduate from Secondary level are fed into the society without any tool to help themselves, or the society, even if they cannot immediately proceed to the University.

The Need for Distance Learning for the Boy Child

Distance learning also called distant education , e- learning and online learning is a form of education in which the main element which include physical separation of teachers and students during instruction and the use of various technologies to facilitate student-teacher and student- student communication.

Added to other alluring compelling facts, the fact of COVID-19 has even restricted the boy-child from attending his place of learning (school). It is important that distant learning be implemented for the boy-child as it enables the teacher and the students to set their own learning pace without being affected by the COVID-19. In a space as vast as the internet, there are infinite subjects and skills which the boy child can learn as to upgrade his intellectual capability. In a COVID-19 prone society, online education enables the boy child to study or be taught from anywhere in the world. This reduces the risk of exploiting him to the virus as there will be no need to commute from one place to another or to follow a rigid schedule.

Introducing Online learning to the boy child will help keep the children engaged as to prevent them getting involved in violent actions/abuse. The distance learning enables the boy child to explore variety of topics while they rest in the comfort of their homes without going through the hassles associated with physical learning. Also, it will enable the boy child who is shy of being among others to participate actively as they will not have to battle with the anxiety that comes with raising a hand in a real classroom with other students watching them.

Ways to Improve Boy-Child Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended family life around the world and this has lead to parents seeking ways to improve the education of their children especially the boy child. It was revealed that to improve the boy-child education, the parents should establish a routine that factors in age- appropriate education programme that can be followed online, on the

television or through the radio. Also, map out a time table for their reading daily and encourage them to write down things they have learnt from the radio/ television programmes.

Moreover, parents can also encourage their children to ask questions and express their feelings. The parents should be patient and understanding as to find out how much they know and then follow their lead. Parents should be sure to acknowledge their feelings and demonstrate that they are listening by giving them a listening ear. This will enable them to pour out their heart and you as the parent should take charge by counselling them and giving them the best advice on their worries. Boy-child education can also be improved by providing IT technologies that aid teaching and learning.

Importance of Education on the Boy-Child

Education is very important in human life, hence, the boy-child should be educated because it is said that they have more responsibilities which include catering for themselves and for other people and for them to be very much effective in the course of handling their responsibilities, they need education. Moreover, studies has shown that the men creates 95% of everything of value in this world and on this planet and the truth is that majority of the wealth of the world is created by men and this cannot be achieved if they were not properly educated and groomed during their early years.

It is also important to educate the boy child as he will mature one day to become the head of a family, and getting educated is a better way of reducing ignorance and imbibing the spirit of tolerance and allowing them to see life from different point of view as against myopic view of some uneducated men. Education is the most powerful weapon which one can use to change the world. Education gives us knowledge of the world around us and changes it into something better. In fact Education is about lessons of life and can change anything.

Educating the boy-child enables him to acquire social intelligence, which is vital for co-existence and networking for survival.

Conclusion

It is seen that good electronic facilities and active involvement of the media will go a long way in educating the boy-child even in the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also advised that parents play their part in the lives of their boy-child as to direct them positively on the affairs of life. The Government and other independent bodies should provide fund for getting IT facilities in school and students should be educated on the use of computers as to aid them in a situation like that of the COVID-19.

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